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IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 50/227: FURTHER MEASURES FOR THE RESTRUCTURING AND REVITALIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS

Subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General

Addendum

Review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of the functional commissions and expert groups and bodies of the Economic and Social Council

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INTRODUCTION

1. In Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/41 of 26 July 1996, adopted pursuant to its consideration of the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996, the Council reaffirmed that the review of the mandates, composition, functions and working methods of its functional commissions and expert groups and bodies, called for in paragraph 70 of annex I to Assembly resolution 50/227, should be completed by the fifty-second session of the Assembly.

2. The Secretary-General's report on the establishment, terms of reference, membership and composition, terms of office of members, reporting procedures and frequency of meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Council is contained in document E/1996/97. This report presents further information on the working methods of the functional commissions and expert groups of the Council.

I. FUNCTIONAL COMMISSIONS

A. Statistical Commission

Election and term of office of the Bureau

3. The Bureau is normally elected at the first meeting of the session. The Statistical Commission meets every two years. Therefore, members of the Bureau hold office for two years.

4. There is no established practice for rotation of members of the Bureau other than that based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Chairmanship of the Commission rotates on a geographical basis in principle, and all regions are given the same opportunity to provide candidates for the Chairmanship. There is, at the same time, an understanding among members of the Commission that competence and familiarity with the issues being considered at the session are the most important criteria to be taken into account.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

5. There is an understanding among members of the Commission that action on draft proposals and texts should be taken without a vote.

6. The Commission takes action on draft proposals submitted by members on the basis of informal consultations. There are no Chairman's summaries as such.

Utilization of informal consultations

7. It has been the practice in this Commission for the Rapporteur to prepare the texts of the draft report in consultation with the Secretariat and members of the Commission. Informal consultations as such do not take place.

Role of the Secretariat

8. The Secretariat traditionally assists the members of the Commission in the drafting of texts, at the request of delegations, not only with regard to substantive issues but also to facilitate the application of United Nations editorial practices.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

9. The Commission holds a general discussion, sequentially, on each agenda item.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

10. It is not the practice of this Commission to hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions.

B. Commission on Population and Development

Election and term of office of the Bureau

11. The Bureau of the Commission is elected at the first meeting of the session. The members of the Bureau hold office for one year.

12. There is no established practice for rotation of members of the Bureau other than that based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

13. There is no formal or informal agreement that action should be taken by consensus. The Commission takes action through decisions and resolutions.

Utilization of informal consultations

14. The Commission always holds informal consultations on all texts under consideration.

Role of the Secretariat

15. The Secretariat plays an active role in promoting action by the Commission and it assists in the drafting of texts for action.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

16. The Commission holds general discussions on specific topics.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

17. The Commission does not hold panel discussions, nor does it engage in question and answer sessions.

C. Commission for Social Development

Election and term of office of the Bureau

18. The Bureau is normally elected at the first meeting of the session. The members of the Bureau hold office for one year.

19. There is no established practice for rotation of members of the Bureau other than that based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. The Chairmanship of the Commission rotates on a geographical basis but the precise sequence may vary. It is not established practice for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

20. There is no formal agreement that action should be taken by consensus. While the Commission endeavours to take action by consensus, there are occasions when votes may be requested.

21. The Commission normally takes action through the adoption of draft resolutions and draft decisions. It does not take action based on Chairman's summaries or agreed conclusions. Chairman's summaries have, however, been included in the report of the Commission as part of the proceedings.

Utilization of informal consultations

22. It has been the practice in this Commission to hold informal consultations on all draft proposals and the draft report.

Role of the Secretariat

23. The Secretariat traditionally assists the members of the Commission in the drafting of texts, at the request of delegations, not only with regard to substantive issues but also to facilitate the application of United Nations editorial practices.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

24. In lieu of a general debate, the Commission holds a general discussion on each agenda item.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

25. The Commission has held a number of panel meetings with invited experts, as well as a dialogue with the chairmen of the Administrative Committee on Coordination inter-agency task forces on follow-up to recent major international conferences.

D. Commission on Human Rights

Election and term of office of the Bureau

26. The Bureau is elected on the first day of the session and serves for a one-year period, until the next session of the Commission.

27. The Chairmanship of the Commission rotates on a strictly geographical basis. It is not established practice for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

28. The Commission takes action through resolutions and decisions and statements by the Chairman, which are normally agreed upon by consensus. However, there is no agreement in the Commission that consensus is required.

Utilization of informal consultations

29. In principle, informal consultations are held on all texts under consideration, unless the Commission is ready to take action immediately on a proposal submitted orally.

Role of the Secretariat

30. The Secretariat normally plays a certain role in promoting action by the Commission. The Secretariat may advise, provide information or propose a course of action.

31. While the Secretariat does not officially draft texts for action by the Commission, it may do so, at the request of delegations, with regard to specific questions.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

32. The Commission normally holds a general debate on all agenda items that are considered in formal meetings, provided that there are delegations inscribed on the list of speakers.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

33. The Commission does not hold panel discussions. However, at its last two sessions, held in 1995 and 1996, question and answer sessions were organized to discuss the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights.

E. Commission on the Status of Women

Election and term of office of the Bureau

34. In accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/21, Bureau members serve for two years. Since the Commission meets annually, Bureau members are elected at the beginning of every other session.

35. There is no formalized practice for rotation of members of the Bureau other than that based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

36. There is an understanding among members of the Commission on the desirability of taking action by consensus. If consensus is not possible, the Commission will take action by voting.

37. The Commission decided, at its fortieth session, in 1996, that the results of its dialogues would normally be reflected in concise, action-oriented agreed conclusions, and it adopted agreed conclusions for the first time at that session. It is continuing to examine the options available to it for the expression of its action proposals.

Utilization of informal consultations

38. The Commission holds informal consultations as the status of negotiations requires.

Role of the Secretariat

39. The Secretariat provides information, identifies options available and assists in drafting proposals, at the request of delegations. It prepares proposals for the organization of the sessions and the conduct of business and drafts the final report.

Inclusion of a general debate

40. The Commission does not hold a general debate. It does, however, engage in a very brief general discussion on the primary agenda item, such as the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

41. The Commission holds substantive panel discussions, whose participants are decided upon in close consultation with the members of the Bureau. In addition to the panel discussions, the Commission makes provision for a dialogue among Governments on the various agenda items.

F. Commission on Narcotic Drugs

Election and term of office of the Bureau

42. The Bureau is elected on the first day of the annual session. The members of the Bureau hold office for one year.

43. The senior Vice-Chairman (or a representative from his/her delegation) is normally elected Chairman at the following session.

44. The Chairmanship rotates on a strictly geographical basis. That is, the Chairman for 1997 will come from Latin American and Caribbean States; the Chairman for 1998 will come from African States; the Chairman for 1999 will come from Asian States; the Chairman for 2000 will come from Eastern European States and the Chairman for 2001 will come from Western European and other States.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

45. Decisions are normally taken by consensus, as part of an informal agreement. Action is taken through resolutions and decisions. The Commission previously experimented with utilizing the option of a Chairman's summary but this has not become practice. In recent sessions, the format of agreed conclusions has been employed, but only for informal open-ended inter-sessional meetings.

Utilization of informal consultations

46. Most draft resolutions are refined during informal consultations.

Role of the Secretariat

47. The Commission depends upon the Secretariat primarily for support services. However, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme plays an active role as substantive Secretariat by assisting the Commission in identifying options available and advising it on technical preferences. The Secretariat drafts texts for action upon request.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

48. The Commission began the practice of holding general debates in 1992 but the result has fallen short of expectations. The holding of general debates in the Commission may still be considered experimental.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

49. The Commission on Narcotic Drugs does not hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions. The Secretariat holds inter-sessional briefings for delegations and, more recently, informal open-ended inter-sessional meetings with major donors to the Fund of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme. Most major donors are members of the Commission but the group of major donors as such is not a body of the Commission.

G. Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice

Election and term of office of the Bureau

50. The Bureau is normally elected at the first meeting of the session. Its members hold office for one year.

51. There is no special arrangement for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session. The members of the Bureau rotate in accordance with Commission decision 1/101: that is, the Chairman for 1997 will come from African States; the Chairman for 1998 will come from Eastern European States; the Chairman for 1999 will come from Latin American and Caribbean States; the Chairman for 2000 will come from Western European and other States and the Chairman for 2001 will come from Asian States. Likewise, the post of Rapporteur rotates according to a specific pattern.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

52. By informal agreement, action is taken by consensus. Thus far, action has been taken through resolutions and decisions. At the fourth and fifth sessions of the Commission, the Chairman, with the assistance of the Secretariat, prepared a Chairman's summary at the conclusion of the discussion of each agenda item.

Utilization of informal consultations

53. Most draft resolutions are discussed and agreed upon during informal consultations. This is accomplished through the establishment of parallel sessions of open-ended working groups or committees of the whole, chaired by one of the Vice-Chairmen.

Role of the Secretariat

54. The Secretariat plays an active role by assisting the Commission in identifying options available to the Commission and advising it on viable solutions. Reports prepared by the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division include concrete proposals for action. The Secretariat helps to draft texts for action only if requested.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

55. The Commission does not hold a general debate.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

56. The Commission does not hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions. The Secretariat holds inter-sessional briefings for permanent missions; more recently, regular and periodic open-ended inter-sessional meetings have been held.

H. Commission on Science and Technology for Development

Election and term of office of the Bureau

57. At the end of each session, the Commission elects its Bureau for the following session. Since the Commission meets every two years, the Bureau retains its functions during the inter-sessional period.

58. There is no special arrangement for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session. The rotation of members of the Bureau is based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

59. There has been an informal understanding among members of the Commission that decisions should be made by consensus. The Commission normally takes action on draft proposals without a vote.

60. The Commission takes action on draft resolutions and decisions. It does not take action on the basis of Chairman's summaries or agreed conclusions. Chairman's summaries have, however, been included in the report of the Commission.

Utilization of informal consultations

61. Informal consultations are held on all draft proposals and the draft report.

Role of the Secretariat

62. The Secretariat traditionally assists the members of the Commission in the drafting of texts, at the request of delegations, not only with regard to substantive issues but also to facilitate the application of United Nations editorial practices.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

63. A general discussion is held on each individual agenda item.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

64. At its second session, the Commission decided that it would carry out its work programme at future sessions, inter alia, through panels, experts or working groups.

I. Commission on Sustainable Development

Election and term of office of the Bureau

65. The members of the Bureau are elected at the first meeting of the session, for a one-year term. The general principle of geographical rotation is observed. There is no senior Vice-Chairman.

Modalities for taking action

66. The Commission has agreed informally that it will take action by consensus. Reports of the Commission have included resolutions and decisions. There is also a Chairman's summary, as appropriate.

Utilization of informal consultations

67. The Commission conducts its work utilizing the format of a plenary meeting and up to three working groups. The Commission does not hold informal consultations as such.

Role of the Secretariat

68. According to the established practice of the Commission, following discussion of the reports of the Secretary-General, the Secretariat prepares, under each agenda item, a negotiating paper reflecting the views and comments expressed by delegations. Further rounds of negotiations take place on these papers, which ultimately are incorporated in the report as decisions of the Commission.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

69. There is a short general debate at the beginning of the regular sessions of the Commission.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

70. The Commission organizes panel discussions for several agenda items and these are followed by a question and answer session with the panel. The panels include guests from the private sector, ministers or former ministers and representatives of United Nations organizations. The Commission normally holds a high-level segment, which includes a panel discussion with ministerial participation. The panels include eminent participants from within and outside the United Nations system.

II. STANDING COMMITTEES

A. Committee for Programme and Coordination

Election and term of office of the Bureau

71. The Committee elects its Bureau at its organizational session, which is normally held a month or so before the substantive session. It elects a Chairman, three Vice-Chairmen and a Rapporteur for a term of one year.

72. The post of Chairman and the post of Rapporteur rotate annually among the regional groups in accordance with a decision taken at the Committee's twenty-fifth session. There is a strict pattern of rotation for the post of Chairman: (a) African States; (b) Eastern European States; (c) Latin American and Caribbean States; (d) Western European and other States; and (e) Asian States. In accordance with that pattern of rotation, the post of Chairman for the thirty-seventh session of the Committee will be held by Western European and other States.

73. It is customary practice for a member of the regional group that occupied the post of senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman the following year. The post of Rapporteur is occupied by a member of the regional group that occupied the post of Chairman the previous year. At the thirty-seventh session the Rapporteur will therefore be elected from Latin American and Caribbean States.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

74. The Committee takes action by consensus. The report of the Committee consists of two parts: (a) an account of the discussion; and (b) conclusions and recommendations. The part of the report reflecting the discussion contains the views expressed by members of the Committee that did not command agreement by all delegations. The conclusions and recommendations section of the report contains the agreements reached on issues raised under specific agenda items.

Utilization of informal consultations

75. It has been the practice of the Committee to hold informal consultations on all substantive items under consideration in order to facilitate the consensus.

Role of the Secretariat

76. The Secretariat plays a proactive role in promoting action by the Committee. This is accomplished by permitting representatives from the substantive offices concerned to attend both the formal and informal meetings of the Committee in order to respond to questions and provide additional information and clarification as necessary. The Secretariat always provides preliminary draft proposals, which are based on the views expressed by delegations during the formal meetings and take into consideration the action required of the Secretary-General, for negotiation by Member States in informal consultations.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

77. The Committee begins its consideration of a specific agenda item by hearing an introduction by the Secretariat. It then holds a discussion on the item.

78. A general debate is held on important items, such as programme planning and the proposed programme budget.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

79. There are no panel discussions in the Committee. At the conclusion of its general discussion or general debate, representatives from the Secretariat answer questions raised by Member States and may also provide additional clarifications and explanations relating to concerns expressed during the general discussion.

B. Commission on Human Settlements

Election and term of office of the Bureau

80. The Commission meets biennially. The Bureau is elected at the beginning of each biennial session, normally during April or May, and holds office for two years. It is not customary for the senior Vice-Chairman to become the next Chairman. The Chairmanship does, however, rotate on a strictly geographical basis.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

81. The Commission takes action on proposals by consensus, as a matter of established practice. Action may take the form of Chairman's summaries, agreed conclusions, resolutions or decisions.

Utilization of informal consultations

82. Informal consultations are held on all texts under consideration.

Role of the Secretariat

83. The Secretariat may assist the Commission by drafting texts for action if specifically requested to do so by Member States.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

84. The Commission does hold a general debate.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

85. The practice has been that all formal discussions are held either in committee or in plenary. The Commission does not normally hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions.

C. Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Election and term of office of the Bureau

86. The Committee elects its Bureau at the beginning of each session. Until 1995, the Committee met every two years and the Bureau was elected for a two-year term. At present, the Committee meets annually, in accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 1995/304, and the Bureau is elected for a one-year term.

87. It is not established practice for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session. The Chairmanship does not rotate on a strictly geographical basis. For example, Eastern European States have not held the Chairmanship since 1971.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

88. At the first formal meeting of the session, the Chairman states that it is understood that all decisions will be taken by consensus. The Committee takes action exclusively through resolutions and decisions.

Utilization of informal consultations

89. Informal consultations may take place on an ad hoc basis.

Role of the Secretariat

90. The Secretariat may assist in the drafting of texts for action.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

91. There is no general debate in the Committee.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

92. The Committee holds neither panel discussions nor question and answer sessions. In its scrutiny of applications from non-governmental organizations wishing accreditation, it systematically provides an opportunity for delegations to question members of the organizations presenting applications.

III. EXPERT BODIES

A. Committee for Development Planning

Election and term of office of the Bureau

93. The Bureau is elected at the first meeting of each session, normally in April or May, for a three-year term. It is not customary for the senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session and there is no automatic rotation among geographical groups.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

94. Action is taken by consensus through agreed conclusions.

Utilization of informal consultations

95. Informal consultations are held only rarely.

Role of the Secretariat

96. The Secretariat prepares background papers for the Committee that suggest possible directions. It assists in drafting texts, which are usually in the form of agreed conclusions rather than proposals for action.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

97. There is no general debate. The discussions proceed item by item on the basis of an agenda.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

98. The Committee has invited resource persons to make presentations and respond to questions from time to time.

B. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Election and term of office of the Bureau

99. The Bureau is elected in May of alternate years, at the beginning of the session. Its members serve for a two-year term.

100. The Chairmanship does not rotate on a strictly geographical basis, nor is there any arrangement by which a senior Vice-Chairman becomes Chairman at the following sessions.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

101. Action is taken by consensus, through agreed conclusions, resolutions and decisions.

Utilization of informal consultations

102. Informal consultations are held on some proposals for consideration by the Committee, as appropriate.

Role of the Secretariat

103. The Secretariat plays an active role in promoting action by the Committee and it assists in drafting texts for action.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

104. The Committee holds a general debate.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

105. The Committee does not hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions.

C. Committee on Natural Resources

Election and term of office of the Bureau

106. The Bureau is elected at the beginning of the session for a two-year term. There is no provision for a senior Vice-Chairman to become Chairman at the following session.

107. The Chairmanship does not rotate on a strictly geographical basis.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

108. Under an informal understanding, the Committee takes action by consensus. Action is in the form of resolutions and decisions.

Utilization of informal consultations

109. The Committee holds informal consultations on all texts under consideration.

Role of the Secretariat

110. The Secretariat plays an active role and helps to draft texts for action.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

111. There is no general debate.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

112. The Committee does not hold panel discussions or question and answer sessions.

D. Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development

Election and term of office of the Bureau

113. The Bureau is normally elected at the first meeting of the session. The Committee meets every two years. The Bureau, therefore, retains its functions for two years.

114. It is not established practice for the senior Vice-Chairman to become the next Chairman. The Chairmanship rotates according to the following sequence: African States, Asian States, Eastern European States, Latin American and Caribbean States and Western European and other States.

Modalities for taking action and format for recommendations

115. There is an understanding among members of the Committee that action on draft proposals should be taken without a vote.

116. There are no Chairman's summaries, as such. The Committee does, however, take action on draft proposals submitted by the Chairman on the basis of informal consultations.

Utilization of informal consultations

117. The Committee holds informal consultations on all texts.

Role of the Secretariat

118. The Secretariat has traditionally played a role in promoting action by the Committee. It assists members in drafting texts, with regard to substance as well as United Nations editorial practice.

Inclusion of a general debate in the work programme

119. There is a general discussion on each agenda item.

Utilization of panel discussions and/or question and answer sessions

120. At the second session, a member of the Committee made a presentation on the topic "Decentralized rural electrification", which was followed by an exchange of views. It is not known if this procedure will be continued at future sessions.